



WASHINGTON COUNCIL FOR PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Children's Trust Fund of Washington

www.wcpcan.wa.gov

Media Contact:

Chris Jamieson | WCPCAN Communications Director
206.389.2412 | chris@wcpcan.wa.gov

Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education Washington Receives Grant to Expand National Early Childhood Project

Research Suggests that Parents Who Receive Support from Early Childhood Programs More Likely to Form Healthy Bonds with their Children

SEATTLE – JAN 29, 2007 – Early childhood professionals have known for decades that they play a unique role in protecting and nurturing young children as well as promoting their social and emotional development. Now there is evidence to suggest that early childhood programs that reach out to parents may also be the best child abuse and neglect prevention strategy.

Washington has been selected to expand an approach aimed at connecting child care centers, parents and communities with the resources and support each need to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.

The Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education Washington initiative is based on national research and evidence that recognizes the important role child care providers play in building protective factors in families with young children. Protective factors help parents use resources, support and strategies that allow them to parent more effectively, even under stress.

“We already know that early learning programs prepare kids for school and promote healthy social and emotional development,” said Governor Gregoire. “Now we see that these programs can also help parents by providing them with support and resources to make choices that are in the best interest of their child.”

“Contrary to the worry of some parents, quality early childhood programs may actually help to strengthen the bonds between parents and children. An early childhood program that can reach out to parents may be the best strategy to help them cope at times when parenting becomes most challenging,” says Joan Sharp, executive director of the Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Based on the work of the national Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) and the support of the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Washington joins 22 states as part of a national effort to explore how evidence-based protective factors for children and families can prevent the occurrence of child abuse and neglect.

“CSSP chose to focus on early care and education for this project because these programs represent a significant and systematic way to reach a large number of very young children and families at an opportune time in their lives,” says Judy Langford, project director for the Strengthening Families strategy at the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

The Strengthening Families approach is the first time that research knowledge about child abuse and neglect prevention has been strategically linked to similar knowledge about quality early care and education. Resources and tools have been developed to support early childhood programs, policymakers, and advocates in changing existing early childhood programs in small but significant ways so that they can build protective factors and reduce child abuse and neglect.

Washington’s Learning Communities

The Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect / Children’s Trust Fund of Washington received \$50,000 in grant funds to implement the Strengthening Families plan and to serve as a resource to the National Alliance and to other Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds. Following a selection process to identify interested child care communities, the following ten agencies were chosen for their commitment to family support:

- Big Bend Community College Family Literacy Program (Moses Lake)
- Centralia College Child Care Center and ECEAP Programs (Centralia)
- ESD 113 Sound to Harbor Head Start/ECEAP (Aberdeen)
- Family Child Care and Preschool (Duvall)
- Lower Columbia College Head Start/ECEAP (Longview)
- Olympia Early Learning Center (Olympia)
- Olympic Community Action Program Early Childhood Services (Sequim)
- Snohomish County ECEAP (Everett)
- St. James Family Center (Cathlamet)
- St. Mike’s Tikes Early Learning Center (Olympia)

The programs funded will work together over the next year to identify and share what makes each a leader in reaching out to and supporting parents, and to develop the tools needed to help other early learning programs better support parents.

“While Washington has been a leader in using prevention science to better protect children and support their early development, there is always more work to be done,” Sharp says. “It makes sense if we want to have the greatest impact to take the science to where the kids are. That’s what this work is about.”

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About Strengthening Families in Washington

The Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education Washington initiative is based on the work of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). With the support of CSSP, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Funds, Washington State is working to provide technical assistance and training to implement the Strengthening Families approach into early care and education programs in 10 learning communities across Washington State. Partners include the Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect/Children's Trust Fund of Washington (WCPCAN), the Department of Health, the Department of Early Learning, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children and the Foundation for Early Learning.

About Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education

Beginning in 2001, the Center for the Study of Social Policy documented the role that early care and education programs across the country can play in strengthening families and preventing abuse and neglect. A new conceptual framework and approach to preventing child abuse and neglect emerged from this study. The approach is organized around evidence-based protective factors that programs can build around young children by working differently with their families.

For more information: http://www.cssp.org/doris_duke/index.html

About the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people's lives by nurturing the arts, protecting and restoring the environment, seeking cures for diseases, and helping to protect children from abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention Program seeks to protect children from abuse and neglect in order to promote their healthy development. The program's primary objective is to integrate child abuse prevention strategies into settings that serve large numbers of young children and their families. For more information: <http://www.ddcf.org/>

About the Center for the Study of Social Policy

The Center for the Study of Social Policy's mission is to promote policies and practices that support and strengthen families and build community capacity for improving the lives of vulnerable populations. The Center works in partnership with communities and federal, state and local governments to shape new ideas for public policy, provide technical assistance, and develop and support networks of innovators.

For more information: <http://www.cssp.org/>

About the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds

The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds assist state Children's Trust and Prevention Funds and promotes and supports a system of services, laws, practices, and attitudes that strengthen families' capacity to provide their children with safe, healthy and nurturing childhoods. For more information: www.ctfalliance.org